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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1316
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7306
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 8508
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ DEC LIMA 4561
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 9816
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5220
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3799
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJC/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS BOGOTA 011162

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SUBJECT: MAYORS UNDER FIRE FOR MISMANAGEMENT, CORRUPTION IN
TWO LARGE CITIES

Summary

¶1. Mayors in Cali and Barranquilla are under fire for alleged mismanagement and corruption. On December 4, the Procuraduria ordered Cali mayor Apolinar Salcedo removed from office and prohibited him from holding public office for 16 years. In Barranquilla, a court placed mayor Guillermo Hoenigsberg under house arrest for corruption. End summary.

Cali Mayor Fired, Claims Racism

¶2. On December 4, the Procuraduria (Inspector General's Office) ordered Cali mayor Apolinar Salcedo removed from office and banned him from holding public office for 16 years. The Procuraduria accused Salcedo of mismanagement of the tender and award of a public contract for collecting city taxes. Salcedo's municipal finance director, Maria del Rodario Pena, was also dismissed and barred from holding office for 10 years for similar accusations. Following an investigation into the tax issue, the Fiscalia (Prosecutor General's office) recently announced it would not prosecute Salcedo.

¶3. Salcedo, who is blind and one of the highest ranking elected Afro-Colombians, immediately said he would appeal the Procuraduria's decision. He told the press on December 5 he will not resign, and claimed he was being attacked by people who do not approve of "his blindness and his color." Asked about Salcedo's charge, Vice President Francisco Santos said that grounds existed to dismiss the mayor. To date, no Afro-Colombian leaders have supported Salcedo's assertion of racism.

¶4. Salcedo appealed the ruling to a Procuraduria appellate commission. If it is upheld, Salcedo could appeal to an administrative tribunal, but would have to leave office immediately. The administrative tribunal appeal could take years to resolve.

¶5. Daily "El Tiempo" reported on December 5 that Salcedo's

popularity had been falling sharply in Cali; about 70 percent now disapprove of his tenure, with 43 percent saying, "he had not done anything." In March, Salcedo overcame a recall effort when numerous signatures were struck from the recall petition for alleged fraud.

Barranquilla Mayor Under House Arrest

[¶6](#). On December 2, an appeal court placed mayor Guillermo Hoenigsberg under house arrest as part of criminal proceeding for cost overruns on the renovation of Barranquilla's City Hall. Hoenigsberg is being investigated for embezzlement and public contract fraud.
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